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Socialism in the U.S.
A.M.Waddell

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SOCIALISM IN THE UNITED STATES.

—♦♦♦—
AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE LITERARY SOCIETIES OF
TRINITY COLLEGE, N. C.,

JUNE 7TH, 1893,

—BY—

HON. A. M. WADDELL.



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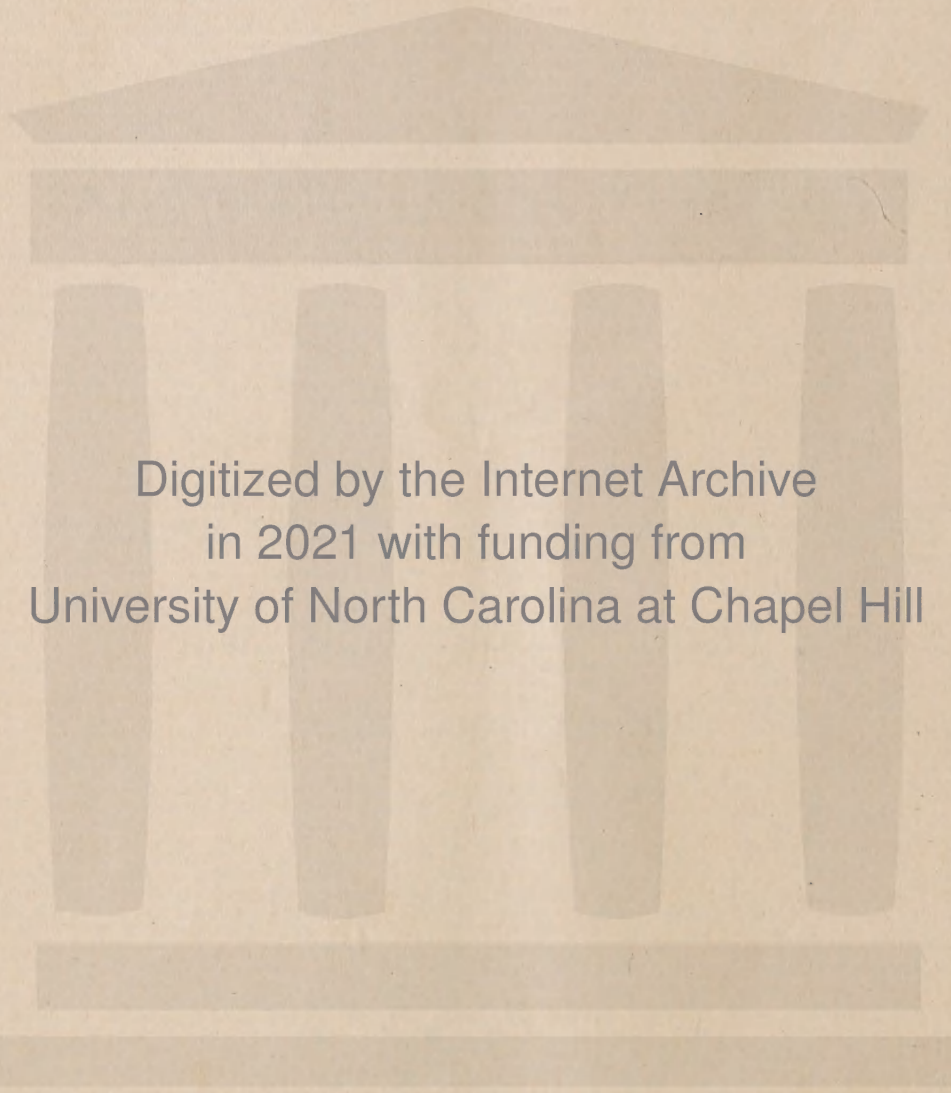
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SOCIALISM IN THE UNITED STATES.

GENTLEMEN OF THE SOCIETIES:

The offering which I bring you to day is not a literary one in the strict sense, and, therefore, may not be what, under the terms of the invitation extended to me, you have a right to expect.

But, in view of the practical experiences which will soon confront you, and of the problems which, as American citizens you will ere long have to aid in solving, directly or indirectly, it seemed to me to be a wise and proper thing to speak to you upon a subject which is more and more attracting the attention of thoughtful people in our country. Both as a matter of philosophic speculation, and of practical statesmanship, it is becoming profoundly interesting and important. No discussion of it on an occasion like this can be other than superficial and fragmentary, but it may serve a good purpose to merely direct your attention to it for a little while.

I invite you to a brief consideration of the subject of Socialism in the United States in its relation to matters of public interest generally.

The older and more reflecting persons in this audience who have any knowledge of the socialistic movements in Europe during the last half century, and have observed the results of them as now developing in this country, will not need to be told that gradually, socialistic ideas, under various names, have spread not only among the mixed and foreign-born populations of the

Northern and Western States, but all over this land. And such persons are alive to the fact that these ideas—which in some parts of the country have taken a permanent hold and everywhere are being diligently cultivated—unless directed, as they can be, towards the attainment of a high civilization will ultimately accomplish the destruction of all that we hold most dear.

If guided and controlled by the enlightened statesmanship and christian conscience of the country they will be the means of incalculable good, but if directed by the unchastened spirit of discontent and revolution they will inevitably bring disaster and ruin upon us. That this spirit of discontent exists and is growing, is true, and it is equally true as in all such cases, that the causes of it and the remedy for it are not clearly understood by the mass of those who feel it.

It is not at all my purpose to discuss the philosophy of Socialism as advocated by the different schools which have existed and now exist. They have differed widely in their theories, but they all agree upon one general principle, which is at war with the fundamental ideas of government cherished by a large majority of the American people. That principle may be defined by the word *paternalism*.

It is true that a large school of socialists advocate the abolition of all existing institutions, but, even they would substitute for them a system which would subordinate in all things the individual to the community, and this is in direct conflict with the American doctrine of the largest liberty of the individual consistent with the welfare of the State.

Nor is it my purpose to go into the economic question between the wage earner and the capitalist, which is claimed by some to be the central principle of all Socialism—except so far as to say that, according to my view, the tendency of Socialism in this country is to produce one at least of the very worst evils that it charges to existing social and political systems, namely: the separation of society into two classes—the millionaires and the great mass of the poor.

I shall content myself with pointing out some of the manifestations of Socialism in the recent political and legislative history of the country which indicate the growth of that spirit among us, and which furnish a field for the work of the true reformer.

It has been the happy fortune of the Southern States, throughout their history, to be exempt from internal disturbances arising from social and economic questions—a state of things which was, of course, attributable to the fact that until the last thirty years negro slavery existed and that until very recently the population was engaged almost exclusively in agriculture, and had, comparatively, but little communication with the rest of the world. Without doubt the judgment of the world is that the exemption from the evils incident to society elsewhere which such a community enjoyed was more than counterbalanced by the actual conditions of their existence; and with this judgment most of us will readily agree, although there are many good men who, reasoning from a philosophic standpoint, do not admit it.

With the radical changes that have taken place in our environment, and under the influence of the spirit pervading the new era in which we live, we are now beginning to confront the practical results of ideas and theories of which we previously had no knowledge, except, through books.

As industrialism increases in the South to the point already reached at the North, these ideas and theories will grow until they become ‘burning questions’ which must be settled.

Now, in order to show that the time when these burning questions will be presented is not so far distant as many optimists suppose, let me give you a condensed statement of the progress of the South in the past few years in two or three industries only, which is marvellous beyond comparison. The figures, which are taken from the last census, show this state of things, viz :

That although the population of the North and West has been increased since 1880 by 5,000,000 immigrants while the South received few or none, and although the one section was at that time enormously rich, with vast manufacturing and other indus-

tries, while the other was poor and undeveloped, still the relative progress of the South has in every direction been equal and in some greatly superior to that of the North and West.

There has been an actual *gain* in the assessed value of property in the Southern States between the years 1880 and 1891 of *one billion, nine hundred million dollars*, and an increase in the average assessed value *per capita* of nearly 100 per cent

At the end of the year 1881 there were only 20,000 miles of poor railroads in the South; now there are 44,000 miles, many of the trunk lines giving a service unsurpassed in the world. This shows an increase of 120 per cent. in ten years, while the total increase in the whole United States for the same time was less than 90 per cent. There are as many miles of railroad in four Southern States to-day as there were in all the Southern States in 1880, and the number of men employed on Southern railroads has increased from 40,000 to 120,000, while the business on them has increased in the same or greater proportion.

In 1881 the South only made about 450,000 tons of pig-iron, but in 1891 she made nearly 2,000,000 tons which is nearly as much as was made in the whole United States in 1876. Ten years ago the North and West made more than nine times as much iron as the South; now they make less than four times as much.

In 1881 the South only produced about 6,000,000 tons of coal; in 1891 she produced more than 23,000,000 tons.

Up to a very few years ago the South made no coke; now she makes about all that is made in the country, excepting Pennsylvania.

Cotton manufacturing, of course, exhibits the highest development. The Southern States now consume about as much raw cotton in their manufactures, as was consumed by the whole country as late as 1866, and they produce "more manufactured cotton goods than were produced in the great German Empire and France together in 1870, and more than the combined product in the same year of the great industrial countries of Holland, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Austria and Switzerland."

There were only 40 cotton-seed oil mills in the South in 1881 with a capital of \$3,500,000; now there are over 200 with a capital of \$30,000,000.

I might continue to give similar statistics in regard to a great many, if not all, the industries of the Southern States, tending to show a development that is almost, if not absolutely, without a parallel; but these will serve to justify my assertion that the time is not so far distant when we will have to meet and settle social and economic questions which have never before presented themselves to our consideration as practical matters.

Now, notwithstanding the screams of the American Eagle, and the cheerful optimism of some recent writers, and the general sense of security which prevails—and justly prevails—among our countrymen as to the future, an intelligent observer of the events of the past few years cannot fail to apprehend that communism or socialism—for the terms seem to be regarded as synonymous by those who advocate the principles involved—is here, and here to stay for good or evil.

I do not refer to the Anarchists of the North-west—the disciples of Banukin—or to any immoral school of socialists, or even to the few really learned Utopian philosophers who, with a spirit of true philanthropy, would offer their economic theories as a remedy for the evils which afflict society. Each and all of these are, and I believe will be, practically harmless. Therefore I am as little apprehensive of the nightmare depicted in that remarkable book *Caesar's Column*, as I am of realizing the dream of Mr. Bellamy in *Looking Backward*.

The socialism of which I speak is the degenerate offspring of respectable parentage, which masquerades under various *aliases*, and does'nt know its own name.

Its chief field of operation in this country has been in the trans-Mississippi territory, and notably in Kansas and some adjoining States.

Recently when there was actual fighting between two political parties for possession of the capitol building in Kansas, thinking

people all over the country began to realize what the propagation of socialistic ideas here was tending to, and they are now fully alive to it. They understand that there is something more than "hard times," and a tight money market behind the movement. While many would never concede it as long as they could find any other source to which they might credit it, the truth is that the origin of this socialistic movement is to be found in the war, and the legislation and political education of the people which followed it, all of which has tended towards an enlargement of the sphere of Federal jurisdiction, the centralization of power at Washington and the corresponding diminution of State and individual rights. In a word paternalism. I say this truth will not be admitted by many because it looks uncomfortably like a vindication of the principles advocated by Southern statesmen from the foundation of the Government.

But it is a truth notwithstanding, and, pleasant or unpleasant, it ought to be recognized and acted upon, and must be if the integrity of our institutions is to be preserved. In the West the leaders of the Socialists, including many Church of England people who have formed a branch of what is called "The Christian Social Union of England," according to printed statements which I have seen, do not hesitate to declare their belief in a paternal government. Among other declarations made by some of them, as published, is that of a clergyman who said: "Paternalism is the only relief for the present terrible social and moral conditions. This government will become paternalism unless it goes to the devil first." This is the thought of the educated among them in the cities, and of course in the rural districts and among the less educated the sentiment, without the reasoning on which it is based, is even more pronounced. Now these doctrines cannot be traced back to the old differences between Federalists and Republicans in the early days of the republic; they are of comparatively recent origin. They are, as I have just said, the fruit of the war and the legislation, which, however necessary for the successful waging of the war while pending, ought to have ceased with its termination, if the government was not to be

transformed into a system never contemplated by its founders. It is true that a remote basis might be found for some of this paternalism in a fact which was first called to public attention by the late Senator Lamar in speaking of another matter, viz : That whereas in 1789 the General Government was the creature of the States, in 1861 a large majority of the States were the creatures of the General Government, having been carved out of the public domain, and that thus the ideas relative to them respectively had undergone a radical change.

But the real and direct origin of paternalism is that which I have given. During the war all eyes were turned to the General Government, all hopes centred in it, all power was entrusted to it. It was the one great overshadowing and protecting force—a thing which it had never been before.

With great armies in the field, great navies on the water, a host of civil officers everywhere, and gathering from the people by direct and indirect taxation revenues which seem fabulous, it came to be regarded as at once the source of all authority, the guardian of all interests, and the dispenser of all bounty.

Its triumphant success in the great conflict served to emphasize these sentiments, and magnify its power, and the result was that when the war ended and the armies were disbanded thousands of "patriots out of a job" were added to the civil list, the war taxes were kept up, and an era of shameless extravagance in every direction began—the government being general almoner. Ingenuity was exhausted in contriving schemes for the expenditure of the enormous public revenues, and the habit of looking to the government for everything was becoming fixed in the public mind. The liberal pension laws, intended for those who had become disabled by wounds or disease contracted in the military service, began to be amended so as to embrace cases never originally contemplated, and have continued to be enlarged in their scope until the amount now expended for pensions alone is nearly three times as great as the entire expenses of the government in the year before the war. A vast empire had been given away to railroad corporations in the West, and to one of them, in addi

tion to its appalling land grant, fifty millions of dollars had been loaned by the government.

Thus the people, of the West particularly, were diligently educated in the principles of paternalism, and it became a custom whenever a locality was visited by calamity, to rush to the government as an earthly providence for comfort and relief. The idea that the government was one of limited powers, and that it could not lawfully transcend these limits as defined in the constitution, was scouted as an echo of secession and rebellion; and if the suggestion was made that the plethoric coffers of the Treasury could not stand further drain the answer was that the government made all the money it needed during the war, and ought to make enough to satisfy the wants of the people whenever necessary. Thus the spectre of "fiat" money which, in the agony of the war had been evoked and had served as a minister of relief, re-appeared to serve the purposes of socialism.

States caught the infection and sumptuary laws began to be enacted, which have at last culminated in the noble effort of the Minnesota legislature to abolish crinoline and regulate the dress of Chinamen. Socialistic legislation of all kinds is constantly being proposed in many States of the Union, and, in some of the cities and large industrial centres, trades-unions exercise a despotic control over all branches of business.

Socialistic ideas have cropped out in the decisions of the Courts, and even that great tribunal which is the crowning glory of the constitution, and the last refuge of endangered rights—the Supreme Court of the United States—has appeared in several recent decisions to countenance them by its very liberal construction of the police powers of the States, as distinguished from their taxing power.

Of course it was to be expected that the mere demagogue, who panders to what he believes to be the dominant sentiment of those among whom he plies his vocation, would promptly seize upon these socialistic and communistic tendencies where they prevail and utilize them for his own selfish ends; or that the smart politician with a reverent care for his own political health would

coquette with them or maintain a prudent silence—but the man whose fortune it is to occupy a position involving a duty to the public, and who has, as every one holding such a position ought to have, the courage of his convictions, must realize that there is now resting upon him no higher obligation than that of doing all in his power to arrest these tendencies, and, if possible, to direct them to beneficent ends.

In the history of socialism the last element to be reached has always been the agriculturist class, and for reasons which need no elaborate explanation.

The owners and tillers of the soil in every land have been the conservators of good government, but in this country we have lived to see almost the entire farming population of the Western States, and a large proportion of them in the South, under the misleadership of wild theorists and ill-informed but fluent orators, driven into the advocacy of socialism and paternalism of a kind so extravagant that only the earnestness with which it is supported, and the danger to the public welfare which it involves could save it from ridicule. It is the most remarkable movement of our time, and is the result of what was originally a legitimate and intelligent co-operative movement for the welfare of the agricultural interests of the country, after the failure of several successive crops, and the pressure of exactions by railroad corporations and money lenders. Beginning with a protest against these exactions and a discussion of measures of relief it degenerated, under the influences already referred to, into a political organization with a "platform" of principles which are at war with all recognized social and economic laws, and which, if they could be enforced, would generate chaos. Although this is still the situation in some of the Western States, it can be said to the honor and credit of thousands of the Farmers of the South, that while they abate no jot or tittle of their complaint against, and denunciation of, the unjust legislation from which they have suffered, they will not permit themselves to be used for the purposes aimed at in this new crusade, for to do so would be to sacrifice upon the altar of fanaticism their patriotism and

common sense. They have never embraced the paternalism involved in a high protective tariff, because many understand that it operates to their hurt and all are under the influence of the traditional hostility to it which has always prevailed in the South. It is to be earnestly hoped that many thousands more of them will abandon the other paternal and socialist heresies, to which they have committed themselves in the hope of redressing grievances, which unquestionably exist, but which cannot be redressed by such means.

But whether they shall hereafter abandon these heresies or not, the fact is that socialism in various forms is widespread in the United States, and it behooves the young men who like yourselves, are about to assume the rights and duties of citizenship to equip themselves with knowledge of the complex government under which they live, in order that those rights may be more clearly understood and those duties may be faithfully performed. It behooves you to fully know that the safeguards of individual liberty which you inherited from your English ancestors, and which your fore-fathers were careful to preserve in written constitutions, will inevitably be imperilled if paternalism is encouraged, and that the sort of socialism prevalent in this country, if carried to its logical consequences, means, eventually, anarchy.

Some of the doctrines advocated by these Socialists are so utterly subversive of the first principles of English liberty not to say of American law, that it would seem impossible to escape the conclusion that they originated and are advocated either from pure ignorance or else a blind recklessness of consequences, or from the two combined ; but there are others that have an apparent basis of justice in the unwise laws that have sometimes been enacted, although if adopted as a remedy for them incalculable wrong would be done.

I do not by any means intend to intimate that all the advocates of socialism in this county are either ignorant or vicious.

I might almost say I wish they were, for then their capacity for harm would be limited. There is a socialism of an opposite

type to that which I have been discussing—the socialism of greed and cunning, which has not the virtue justly attaching to those, who, believing themselves oppressed, would seek redress by such crude and wild schemes as have been projected by them. Associated capital is quite as capable of perpetrating injustice, and more so, than associated labor is of resisting it, and the limits within which the one may lawfully operate ought to be no more difficult to define than those of the other. What the American people think on that subject has received one illustration, at least, in the Anti-Trust law.

There is, as I have already said, an optimistic view of this matter of socialism in this country. Many persons regard it as only one of the passing phenomena of our national life, which will have its day, and soon, in the rapid rush of events, pass away and be forgotten. I wish I could take that view of it, but I cannot; and it is because I regard it as one of the serious problems which have been developed in the civilization of our country and which will remain to try the statesmanship of your generation at least, that I thought it a fit subject for discussion on this occasion. I do not think that the extent to which socialistic ideas have been disseminated, and the strong hold they have taken upon the minds of millions of our people are fully appreciated by most of us. We are slow to believe the prophets of evil, and are apt to delude ourselves with false hopes as to the future of the Republic. Scarcely anybody believed that there was really going to be war between the States until the guns opened on Fort Sumter—and some not even then—although they had been gradually approaching it for many years. Peaceful revolutions have not been frequent in human history, and the millenium is not here yet. Do not assume from this remark that I am an alarmist or that I apprehend any violent revolution in the country in the early future, for such is not the case. I am only pointing out what seems to be a source of danger which ought to be and must be guarded against and, if possible, turned to good uses.

If the ideal of the loftier school of Socialists, as known in England and Germany, could be attained the result would be

something very near akin to the Christian Commonwealth, a pure Democracy; but that is a dream, which, if ever realized among men, is ages ahead of us. Our business is with the present, and the socialism of the present in our country is inimical to religion, and tends to the subversion of free institutions.

How is it to be met? By the cultivation of a spirit of justice, and moderation, and forbearance, and obedience to law—by keeping government within the limits which our wise forefathers prescribed for it, and by preserving, with unfaltering devotion, that individualism which is the corner-stone of Anglo Saxon liberty. To accomplish this, cowardice must be banished from pulpit, and press, and legislatures and courts. Men must have the courage of their convictions and allow no unworthy motive of expediency to come between them and their duty. That is the curse of our public life to-day and the cause of many of the ills of the body politic. In politics, as in trade, there are those who will “crook the pregnant hinges of the knee that thrift may follow fawning,” and, knowing the right, will still the wrong pursue in dealing with the interests of the people. May their tribe decrease, and disappear; but it will not until there is universal assent to and a practical enforcement of the maxim that “public office is a public trust to be administered for the benefit of the people.”

Among the early Greeks the word “*idiotes*”—an idiot—meant only a private person, as contradistinguished from one holding a public position and participating in the management of public affairs. Public office was regarded by them not only as essential to a man’s dignity and importance in the community, but necessary as the means of acquiring knowledge.

Hence being out of public position and a mere private citizen, or “*idiotes*,” became synonymous with being an ignorant and uneducated person; and this secondary meaning of the word finally degenerated, when transferred into English, into the meaning now attached to it—namely, a person without any intelligence at all and incapable of learning anything. Judging by the conduct and utterances of some modern public functionaries we are

justified in believing that they have adopted the early Greek view of public office, and would apply to all mere private citizens the original word—according to its present meaning.

I think it is a matter worth considering whether this view will not be strengthened by the establishment of *an official class* in this country under the operation of the Civil Service Law; but I do not intend to discuss it.

Now, young gentlemen, I have presented to you (in a very superficial and fragmentary way as I said at the beginning of my remarks) one of the interesting subjects with which you will have to deal when you become full fledged citizens and voters, and in closing the discussion of it I would commend to you the importance of studying the constitutional history of your country, and the great modern writers upon economic science, whence you may gather the knowledge that will be needful to you when confronted by it, and other problems that await you.

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